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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE FAR EAST
AND
UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
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JOINT UN/UNESCO SEMINAR ON URBANIZATION IN THE ECAFE REGION

Jointly sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs and the Secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, in co-operation with the International Labour Office

8-18 August 1956
Bangkok, Thailand

REPORT ON ITEM 4(4)
SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL and LABOUR POLICIES

Report Prepared by Mr A.F.M. Abdul Haq (Pakistan)

The subject was introduced by the Rapporteur with some brief remarks. He confined the discussion mainly to educational policies as the matters relating to social and labour policies had already been discussed previously. He said that the Seminar was designed to clarify the problems arising from rapid urbanization in the ECAFE region and was expected to pin-point the problems facing policy makers in the respective fields.

A quick look was taken at the existing situation in the rapidly growing urban areas. He held that apart from the natural growth of population by increasing birth rate, and decreasing death rate, there had been heavy influx of people to urban areas due to various reasons such as, want of employment in the villages, possibility of employment in the cities, political insecurity due to war and internal disturbances and movement of population due to political partition. The educational facilities which were inadequate even before this influx could not at all cope with the increased demand created by the new situation.

/The authorities

The authorities had a hard time in providing food, clothing and shelter to the incoming migrants, which naturally claimed the highest priority. So, though the need for education was recognized, it had to wait till the other crying problems were tackled. Educational facilities could not therefore be extended as quickly as the population increased. The result was overcrowding in schools and colleges. Many of them had to work in double shifts for different sets of pupils and some had to run evening and night classes as well. This is still true for many areas, though a large number of schools have already been built. Taking advantage of the shortage, some shrewd and unscruplous persons started a few educational institutions with profit motive, charging very high fees and providing very inferior type of facilities in the shape of accommodation, equipment and staff.

It was pointed out that people had great faith in the power of education in influencing human behaviour and it could be used to bring about desirable forms of behaviour or response to given circumstances. But the existing educational facilities in the urban areas in ECAFE region were inadequate. So in planning future extension of existing cities and establishment of new towns. It was essential to locate educational institutions of different types at convenient centres of residential areas so that the children of that area could attend schools without having to travel a long way amidst the hazards of city traffic. There should be one elementary school for each two to four thousand of the population and a secondary school for say, eight to sixteen thousand population. Vocational schools technical schools, polytechnics, and evening classes of different kinds should also be located at convenient centres. Provision should also be made for counselling and guidance and dissemination of information about employment opportunities and the qualifications required for them.

While planning for educational facilities for the children, the adults were not to be forgotten. It was well known that a large proportion of the adult population of ECAFE region migrating to urban areas was illiterate, which stood in the way of their adjustment to urban life and to their employment

/in better

in better paid jobs. Arrangement should be made to educate the adult illiterates and to orientate them to the urban life. Apart from formal literacy they needed training in safety against the hazards of urban traffic, and of machines in factories. They had also to be accustomed to work at fixed hours. They were to be cautioned against absenteeism and laziness which would impair their efficiency.

The factory labourers were not to be considered merely as so many operatives in the production lines. They were to be treated with sympathy and understanding as human beings, having psychological and emotional needs, to be satisfied labour welfare officers of the right type could do a lot in making the workers happier and better adjusted to the changed environment.

It was also essential to utilize the informal agencies for education, such as the church, the temple, the mosque, the club, the library, the community centre, the museum, the press, the radio, the cinema, the television etc.

Education for complete living included education for work as well as leisure. Education for work was simple to understand. Its aim was to develop economic competency to enable the individual to earn a living. But education for leisure might seem to be a little more difficult. Its aim was create in the individual a taste for healthy pursuits to utilize his leisure time so that he may be able to share in the cultural enjoyment of literature, poetry, drama, music, films, sports and the like, and to make an active effort in creating recreation for himself.

He added that human beings were valuable materials potentially capable of making important contributions to the happiness and well-being of the total human race. It was our own responsibility to develop their potentiality by giving proper education and opportunities to be useful citizens of the world. Education must help the individual to adapt himself to his new situation and give him the necessary orientation for the changes confronted in an urban area. Such adjustment would prevent him from becoming a delinquent, a neuretic or a deviate.

/Generally speaking,

Generally speaking, industrialists in the ECAFE region did not recognize the importance of such social investments as building of schools, clubs, libraries and hospitals for their workers. In this respect governments would have to compel industrialists to re-invest a part of their profits in such projects.

Along with the education of the urban population we had to remember that the need for education in the villages was more urgent, as illiteracy and ignorance was more acute in rural areas. We could utilize the educational projects in the villages in arresting the drift to urban areas without proper preparation for gainful employment. The condition of living in rural areas could be improved through UNESCO's Fundamental Education programmes, through Village AID and community projects, which tried to help the villagers to help themselves. In addition to imparting literacy to the villager, these projects aimed at improving the condition of living in the villages, and creating opportunities for employment or self-employment by encouraging small industries for utilizing local raw materials. Agricultural income could also be increased through V. AID projects, by adopting simple improved methods, introducing vegetable farming, horticulture, fruit culture and better utilization of land through crop rotation. These measures might decelerate, if not arrest, large-scale migration to urban areas, and mitigate the evils of over-rapid urbanization such as overcrowding, dirt, disease, destitution and moral degradation. It had to be remembered that the most profitable investment a backward country could make was to spend on education.

The importance of adapting UNESCO's Fundamental education programmes for introduction in urban areas was also stressed by the speaker.

An interesting and lively discussion followed. Some of the points made in the discussion are mentioned below:

i. The International Conference of Social Work, in its recent meeting had discussed the ways and means for combating the evils of over-rapid urbanization.

ii. Labourers liked to take advantage of adult education programmes if they could afford the cost.

/iii. Industrialists

iii. Industrialists in Ahmedabad in India, provided several amenities such as libraries for their workers and scholarships for their children.

iv. In service training in industry was helpful in improving efficiency and productivity and reducing accidents in factories.

v. In addition to academic subjects, it was necessary to give a technical and practical grounding to the students.

vi. Accelerated technical training could be given in factories which could be decentralized to avoid the evil effects of rapid urbanization.

vii. Community projects for development and self-help could be extended to urban areas with great advantage.

viii. The educational system of each country should cater to its own needs but should not concentrate on technical education to the exclusion of humanities and general cultural subjects.

ix. Science students should know something of humanities and the students of humanities should acquire some general knowledge of science to broaden their outlook.

x. Effective provision should be made for the education of the physically and mentally defective children with a view to making them useful citizens.

The Seminar arrived at the following conclusions regarding educational policies.

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SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES TO OVER-RAPID INDUSTRIALIZATION
(Item 4(2))

Report prepared by J.D.N. Versluys (UNESCO)

How far are there really alternatives to the rapid growth of cities was the first question to be discussed. Is planning really possible, and if so, is it desirable? In the discussion it came out that although there was certainly some scope for planning, the existing situation could be only modified, not fundamentally changed. However, by the location of administrative services and state industries, by building programmes and fixing their rent, by providing transport facilities, by a system of permits for establishments of industries, or retail trade, etc. the government can certainly have considerable influence on the pattern of development.

/The American

The American delegate, however, warned against too much planning. A planning service which makes a mistake bears a very grave responsibility although it was not denied that individual entrepreneurs also made mistakes, but these did not have such a large scale effect. A system in which certain freedom was left to individuals within a general framework of planned development seemed an acceptable solution.

If planning is needed, it is important to know where the balance lies between urban and rural development. It is not possible to give off-hand an answer to this question. In India 70 per cent of the population lives on agriculture and is not quite able to produce enough for the country; in the United States the percentage is 12 and a large surplus is produced; in the United Kingdom 5 per cent lives on agriculture but there is a deficit. What is the "right" proportion? It obviously depends on the socio-economic structure of the country concerned how far urbanization should go, how many cities are really needed.

The reason of existence of a city is the opportunity it provides for division of labour. In the city there is a great diversity of skills which makes it possible to procure a wide range of articles and services. The range of needs and services therefore determines the degree of urbanization. This poses the problem of needs.

Every culture has its own value system and in that system there is a certain set of goods and services which are "normal" for an individual belonging to a certain group in that culture.

It is not always realized how deeply the behaviour of each individual is conditioned by the culture to which he belongs. There are relatively few human actions which are not fully accounted for by the culture in which he lives, for even creative work is little more than drawing a little further the line that had already been indicated by the culture. All the more so in every day life. There is a large set of automatic reactions which facilitate life considerably. Herskovits in an article in the International

/Social

Social Science Bulletin[1] gives the example of speech. After the human being has learned how to speak, what muscles to use to utter certain sounds which have a certain meaning in his society, his speaking becomes automatic which "frees the individual to give conscious thought to what he is going to say, and makes it unnecessary to pay attention to the mechanisms of speech, he must use in saying it".[2] Even seemingly fully spontaneous utterances are culturally conditioned. When a child who has grown up in a Malay speaking society falls and hurts himself he will cry "aduh", but a child grown up in an English speaking society will say "outch" in the same circumstances. The kind of food we enjoy and of clothes we like depends on our culture with only slight individual deviations.

Every individual has in his mind a "norm" or "standard" of living and his actual "level" of living ought to correspond to that standard.[3]

Where the range of needs is very limited every household is nearly self-sufficient. In small villages in most Asian countries one may not find a single shop, or perhaps a very small one. Prof. Isomura stated in his paper (URB/11, p.12) that one finds "11.3 stores in the rural areas against 24.5 in the urban areas per 1,000 persons". Moreover, the size and variety of shops in urban centres will certainly be larger.

/This difference

1/ M.J. Herskovits, Motivation and Culture Pattern in Technological Change ISS B, Vol.VI, No.3, p. 388ff.

2/ Herskovitz op.cit. p. 392.

3/ See also Lasker, Standards and Planes of Living in the Far East, New York, 1952.

This difference is of the greatest influence on the outlook of village people. In a small village in India or Indonesia where there is practically no division of labour and, therefore, no specialization, it is understandable that, as there is no difference in the quality of experience, the quantity only counts. This explains the influence of old people (although there are also other factors). It is interesting, again, to note that the very few like the village teacher who do have another kind of experience, are in high esteem. In the city, on the other hand, where there is an enormous range of specialization which means a rich variety in experience, the respect for the old is far less. The value systems of city dwellers and village people widely differ, especially in Asian countries where these differences are so much deeper as was pointed out in earlier discussions.

When turning back to the balance between urban and rural development, it was found that, although no particular figure could be stated as the desirable proportion because of the different social-economic and value systems, nevertheless the percentage of persons depending on agriculture in the densely populated areas of Asia was certainly too high. Various survey in different countries in Asia seem to indicate that even without a change in techniques, approximately 30 per cent of the rural workers could be dismissed without any appreciable loss in agricultural production.

It is obvious that such enormous numbers cannot be absorbed by the cities. What solutions can be found?

Is a decrease to be expected in the rate of population growth? In only one country of Asia, in Japan, such a decrease has now clearly started: the birth rate went down from 31 per thousand in 1919-23 to 19 per thousand in 1954.[1] However, a large percentage of this decrease is due to abortion, a means which is not acceptable to most other countries of Asia. The other countries are in the middle of what has been called the "demographic revolution", namely a very high natural increase due to a strong decrease in the death rate brought about by better hygienic and medical measures which is not balanced by a lower birth rate. The result is a natural increase as high as about 3% per year as reported from Ceylon and Malaya, for instance. India has now developed a scheme for birth control clinics which seem to have more success in the towns than in rural areas. Various reasons can be given for this difference, but most important seems to be that the urge for family planning is stronger in the cities where better education and a higher level of living make people aware of the importance of maintaining that level and of aiming at a higher standard. This also brought out the question whether this differential fertility would not endanger the quality of the population, as it was feared that the procreation of the less talented part of the population would be markedly faster than that of the other group. However, it was pointed out that it was not a matter of higher intelligence which created the difference, but of opportunity for education. It was clear from experiences in other countries that birth control gradually permeated the whole society and, although the "illiterate masses" seemed to grow faster in the first instance than the intelligentsia, this difference disappeared with the spread of education.

One of the Indonesian participants pointed to a solution in quite a different direction which was more acceptable to his country, namely, "transmigration". It was not only expected that the overpopulation of Java could somewhat diminish by the migration of colonists to the Outer Islands, but this movement might also substantially contribute towards the development of those underpopulated areas.

1/ Prof. Eiichi Isomura, Urbanization in Japan, Conf. paper URB/11 p.22.

/However,

However, it was agreed that family planning nor migration would be able to solve the problem, although they might give some relief to over-populated rural areas. As the countries of Asia are predominantly agricultural, it seemed to be necessary to find the solution, partly at least, in agricultural improvement. By the intensification and diversification of agriculture it should be possible to bring about a higher productivity per worker. Such changes in agriculture would certainly require more workers per acre, and this might provide some solution. However, it was realized that this would require, in most cases, more than just the introduction of cash crops or a switch to horticulture, as the prerequisites would be a steady water supply, agricultural education, and rural development in general. This should include provision of more and better amenities in rural areas in order to make the village a more agreeable place to live in. If such a change would succeed, it might mean a double advantage: a large number of un- and under-employed workers could be absorbed who are now potential migrants to the cities, and the gulf between village and city culture would become narrower. For this new kind of agriculture would require more careful methods based on scientific research, would bring about a certain specialization, would enable village people to aim at a higher standard of living and to bring them closer to the understanding of city mentality. This would be enhanced by their more numerous and intensive contacts with the city or town, as their economy would change from a largely subsistence to a market economy.

Finally, the decentralization of industries was discussed in its social aspects. The example of Japan quoted in the ECAFE paper (URB/3, pp. 2-3) and its small industries seemed of particular importance. It seemed interesting to add that 54% of Japan's industrial workers were engaged in small establishments of 5 persons or less in the thirties when Japan's industrial production was probably at its peak. These workshops needed limited capital equipment. Such small industries are possible when there is an excellent economic organization providing for regular marketing of the products, cheap power supply (usually electricity) and long working hours. The social aspects of these industries

/are certainly

are certainly not only favourable. Labour laws cannot easily be enforced in such small establishments and amenities available in large factories are usually not provided. Moreover, one should not forget that these industries are often situated in large cities and thus may even help city growth, although it is certain that a large part is to be found in villages or small towns.

Definite advantages are: the workers need not leave their families; personal relationship with the employer and fellow-workers; the villager learns the value of time; his sense of precision is sharpened; some working discipline is learnt although these small establishments do not have the rigid organization of large factories; there is scope for the educated young man who now finds work in his own village instead of going to the city and so draining the village from its best elements. All this again helps to bridge the gap between village and city. There are two more advantages, namely, the large number of independent "industrialists" possible in such an organization which enlarges the number of people accustomed to taking decisions and, finally, the understanding of the machine with which the labourers work will give them a greater feeling of security.

It is not always realized that in a small establishment with simple machinery it is possible for the worker to have a perfect understanding of how the machine works, and how it serves him. He can rely upon his tools and knows how to handle them and to maintain them. This gives the worker in a small and simple industry a definite advantage over his colleague in a large factory with complicated machinery where the individual worker only carries out a small part of the total manufacturing process without being able to understand or to control the total industrial process. This makes his work automatic. His lack of understanding inevitably influences his whole outlook: as he is accustomed to not understanding his immediate environment he might be an easy prey for superstition or political humbug. He will not have the feeling of security his fellow worker may have who really understands his machines and so takes the habit of wanting to understand the things of his environment.

/Mr. Phillips

Mr. Phillips (UNESCO) whom Mr. Versluys called upon to supplement his statement said the subject of alternatives raised questions of priorities. Although the over-all possibilities of fundamental change in urbanisation might be small, nonetheless at the level of specific programmes, the choice of alternatives could be of vital importance. He listed a number of the factors which had to be taken into account in making decisions which had social consequences. Mr. Phillips also thought that as a matter of balance emphasis should also be placed upon the role of urban areas in stimulating the process of innovation and imitation which played a vital role in economic growth. Social change and innovation sometimes resulted in an increase of crime and had disruptive effect which was the price of change, but conformity in too rigid cultural lines was not stimulating to progress. The extent of the social disruption a community could bear depended upon the strength of its cultural core and the degree of social cohesion which could be shown during change. This varied from country to country and was affected to be taken into account by policy makers from the sociological angle when determining problems of the time to which Dr. Versluys had referred. The positive side of the picture was that human beings showed a high degree of adaptibility, particularly where educational facilities were available and there was an economic incentive for them to make the change quickly.

Prof. Hauser finally remarked that both views were valid: the city is the place for the innovator, but, if he is a social innovator like Buddha or Socrates, or Christ or Mohamed, he may run the risk of being killed, but he may also become a king. The economic innovator may become a millionaire or go to jail. Cities produced the great arts and the universities. But also the great oriminals. The fact is that the mixture of cultures which is typical for real city life, brings about innovations, although it procures, at the same time, great difficulties of adjustment.